

ADVERSE EFFECT OF REMOVAL OF DUTIES ON PRICE OF FOREIGN TIMBER.

A counter-statement, violently opposed to free trade, says:—Since 1839 we have taken off duties on Baltic timber and deals from 75 to 85 per cent.; by the repeal of the navigation laws we have advanced freights from 30 to 40 per cent.; and I defy any man to prove that the gain to the consumer exceeds 30 per cent. But what have we done for the foreigner? In 1839, the price of best red deals at St. Petersburg was 51. 15s. per thousand; it is just now 94. 5s. for best Russian timber was 32s. per load; it is now 44s.; Russian staves were 60s. per mille; and they are now 114s.; and as to Gotteneburg, a little port in Sweden, where they used to be glad to make shipments of their goods for anything we would give for them, their merchants are now exceedingly wealthy, and their prices at least 100 per cent. higher than before; the cargoes were carried to put money into their pockets at the expense of our national revenue. The writer asserts that the demand which used to exist for English timber is destroyed; and as to colonial timber and deals, that they could not be imported at all were it not for the low freights home, through the outward freight being kept up by emigration.

We shall be glad to hear anything that may be said on the other side of the question.

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

A second fall of a railway bridge crossing the Bucks line has recently occurred. The structure last on the site was erected only last year, on the ruins of the previous one. Both appear to have given way while trains were passing under them. The locality is Binton-hill, near to Padbury, where the cutting is 50 or 60 feet deep, and but a short distance from the London side of Buckingham. The more immediate cause of the fall is said to have been a slip in the clay in the slope of the cutting, which took place beneath the foundation of one of the piers. The late heavy rains are blamed; and as it is said that the tumble down "could not be avoided by any engineering skill or forethought," there appears to be but a bleak prospect even of future safety; and we would recommend all and sundry to avoid this fair-weather way after "heavy rains," which have evidently the mastery over it, and may not be disposed to let off so easily as heretofore the unfortunates who may chance for the future to overthrow its bridges by merely passing under them:—The Morayshire Railway, a single line about 6½ miles long, has been completed, it is said, at a total cost of 30,649l. or less than 5,000l. a mile; and this includes 5,000l. costs of obtaining the Act. The locomotives are called tank engines, running on six wheels, and weighing 14 tons with coals and water. The engineer of the line is Mr. Samuel, of London.

A question of a very grave and momentous nature has been started by the London and North-Western Company, in a proposal made by them to the Great Western, that these two immense corporations ought to amalgamate, of course under Parliamentary sanction. The London and North-Western is itself a vast amalgamation of separate corporations or companies, and the absorption of the Great Western into this same monopoly—for that is the real question—would constitute an imperialism in imperio, which would not be unaided even then with its conquests, but would inevitably tend more forcibly than ever to extend itself in every direction till the extremities of Britain were united in one enormous centralised amalgamation of schemes and naturally self-interested money-makers. Of course, the North-Western authorities are not so sanguine as to suppose or expect that they will ever be allowed to amalgamate with the Great Western except under Government control of some sort, a control which they themselves were among the first to deprecate on a late occasion. But a complete Government control of the only highway of the people is itself a serious question, in which the people are likely to take by no means a passive interest; and as for a Government control that would not be complete and effectual, if we

mistake not that is even a still more serious question. In short, the whole principle and policy of our railway system must be brought under discussion by such a proposal; and, indeed, so far as regards the settlement of this principle and this policy, the sooner the better. It is clear that the subject of discussion, come when it may, cannot and will not be limited to the mere question—great and important as it is—of an amalgamation of the London and Western with the London and North Western. Even as it is, the North Western have an acknowledged eye to the Midland also, with which they already propose to negotiate as well as with the Great Western. As to the latter, its prospect of opening up a competing line, viz Shrewsbury, to Liverpool, we suspect, is one of the main moving causes, though a concealed one, of the North-Western's present proposal,—a competing line by which the public would assuredly greatly benefit; so that the public interest and those of the proposed amalgamators, clash at once, whatever benefits the public may be likely otherwise to reap from such an arrangement.

OPENING OF THE VICTORIA DOCK AT LEITH.

THE new dock at Leith was formally opened for traffic last week. The works were designed by Mr. Rendel, F.R.S. and carried out by the contractors, Mr. John Barry and Messrs. Thomas Hutchings and Co. chiefly under the superintendence of Mr. A. T. Andrews, resident engineer.

The new dock contains exactly five imperial acres. It is entered on the north-east through a pair of massive gates, 62 feet wide, and which, though weighing 55 tons, may easily be moved by one man. The depth of the water in the dock will vary from about 26 feet in spring tides to 21 feet in neap tides. Two sheds, each 150 feet in length and 30 feet in width, are erected; between which a six-ton wrought-iron crane is to be placed, while on the east wharf, one calculated to raise 30 tons is in course of erection. The wharfage on the south amounts to 165 feet in width; on the east, 130 feet; and on the north, 75; while the west can be widened indefinitely to suit the traffic.

The arching to carry the railway commences at the west end of the dock, and is supported by piles 30 feet apart, which leave sufficient access for timber rafts, &c. to the ground lying westward between it and the old west breakwater.

The arching is 21 feet wide, and extends 1,000 feet in length, presenting a convex face to the harbour. At the northern extremity of the arching the new west breakwater and timber staging commences. The breakwater is composed of very large stone pitchers, placed on the outside of a pyramidal mass of rubble stone and clay, and rising to 6 feet below the top of the timber staging, or 20 feet above low-water mark. This staging is a continuation of the arching, but the piles are only 10 feet apart. It extends 1,600 feet in a north-western direction: at this point it is joined by the low-water pier, which is of a similar description of work as the last, but 40 feet wide and 320 feet long.

The arching, timber staging, and low-water pier are to be lighted with gas. An iron light-house is to be placed at the extremity of the low-water pier.

The total distance from the sea-wall on outside of the new dock will be seen, from the above measurements, to be 1,041 yards, or nearly three-fourths of a mile. The planking on the top is laid transversely.

The new extension of the east breakwater is 1,000 feet in length from the old part, and presents a concave face to the harbour: like the old part, it is 13 feet wide. The total length of the east breakwater and staging is now 1,178 yards.

To exhibit the magnitude of the works, we annex a list of what they embrace, viz.—330,000 cubic yards of soil and clay of excavation; 860,000 cubic feet of ashlar and block stone masonry; 16,000 cubic feet of rubble and mixed masonry; 165,000 tons of rubble stone;

8,000 cubic yards of mortar; 233,000 cubic feet of fir; 16,000 cubic feet of oak and elm; 180 tons of wrought iron; and 180 tons of cast iron. The old sea-walls are underpinned 12 feet high and 12 feet deep—a work of great care and difficulty.

BUILDERS' BILLS.

THE OPINIONS OF SURVEYORS.

BETTS v. COLLINS.—This action, brought a short time ago in the Wandsworth County Court, to recover 112. 15s. for painting a house, and the other which follows, afforded an instance, the learned judge (Prater) observed, of the necessity of builders' disputes being referred to a tribunal where gentlemen versed in surveying and building presided.

The plaintiff, a painter and builder, of Clapham, said he was employed by Mrs. Collins, to paint a house belonging to her at Clapham. No contract price was named. The work was well done, but Mrs. Collins's son complained of the charges, and would not pay more than five pounds, which he, plaintiff refused. He then called in a surveyor to take the quantities, and to report upon the way the work was done.

Mr. Clarke, a surveyor, said, at the request of the plaintiff, he carefully went over the work pointed out by Mr. Betts, and also over an adjoining house for which plaintiff was paid 50l. In his opinion the work was well done, and the charges were fair.

By Mr. Haynes.—Is not a builder now. Has been a surveyor for five years. After taking the quantities determined the charges from Laxton's Price Book.

Mr. Haynes said he was instructed that the charges were reasonable, and that the sum of 61. 10s. paid into court was ample. He called Mr. Mills, ornamental painter, of Cripple-gate. The witness stated he found it very indifferently done altogether, and should consider 61. 10s. a compensating price. Would have done it for 51. or 61.

Mr. Williams, painter, of Silver-street, Chesham-side.—A great part of it was second-rate work. His estimate of it was 61. 17s. 8d. Would have done it for that price. He took the prices from Sterling's Book of Prices.

By the Plaintiff.—Measured from his own head, and did not take the quantities from the bill sent in. It is seldom two men measure the work alike or in the same way. No two surveyors could measure the same. Tradesmen measure differently. I take the superficial feet.

The Judge.—Well, after that evidence, I should very much like to know what opinion I can have upon measurement, either by surveyors or tradesmen. One would think Euclid was unknown to surveyors. I can well understand the difference of prices, but to find no two men can measure superficies alike is extraordinary. My decision must be unsatisfactory, but as another builder's dispute follows this, I will reserve my remarks until I hear that. I shall deduct ten shillings.

Verdict for plaintiff, less ten shillings, and costs allowed.

TENNENT v. NICHOLLS.—The plaintiff is a builder in a small way, at Battersea: the defendant is a wax chandler. The sum sought to be recovered was 191. 7s. 10d. and defendant had paid 100l. into court as sufficient.

Plaintiff stated that defendant employed him to do the brickwork of a new house in the York-road, at the contract price of 39s. per rod. Besides this he did other jobs, and found the materials for the latter. Had drawn 39l. When the bill was sent in defendant refused to pay more than 5l. and complained of the work, and requested him to call in a surveyor. He did so. Until the bill was sent in, no fault was found with the work, and Mr. Bowes, defendant's surveyor, gave him great credit.

Mr. D. W. Young, surveyor, of Wandsworth, said he went over the work, and in his opinion it was well done. Of course it was not to be expected that a fourth-rate house like the defendant's would have the same work in it as a first-rate. His valuation came to 50l. 7s. 10d.

Mr. Githam said they had heard a great deal about doctors disagreeing, but he would for the future substitute surveyor for doctor, for in this case he had two surveyors, who would swear that the work, instead of being as Mr. Young said, well done, was done most shamefully, and that the 100l. paid into Court was more than plaintiff was entitled to.

Mr. C. Bowes, surveyor, of Battersea, said he was defendant's surveyor. He measured the work, and did not find much difference in Mr. Young's, and his quantities. He differed in the prices, and his estimate, allowing 39s. per rod for the brick work, came to 481. 2s. 3d. The work was very badly done.